



“A LAI OF ‘THE DYING COW HAND’S LAMENTATION’”

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aka
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Judge Roy Bean's Jersey Lilly Saloon and Courtroom” in Langtry, Texas (1837)

Photo courtesy Library of Congress

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Gunslinger from “*The Great Train Robbery*”

A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?”

ISAIAH 40:6-8; cf., Ps 89:3-6.¹

... *that* I’ll die for ‘one little kiss’ and *Felina* good-bye.

Marty Robbins, “*El Paso*”

For thy sweet love rememb’red such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Wm SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet XXIX

¹ ... *but* as yesterday.



*In ancient Egypt bee-keepers would barge hives on the river
Nile, leap-frogging just ahead of the nectar, one step before spring ...
bringing life to the desert – honey for Pharaoh ^{LHP}*

“A LAI OF ‘THE DYING COW HAND’S LAMENTATION’”

INTRODUCTION

***“The Bard of Armaugh” – The Cowboys – The Singing Cowboy: Horse and Ballad –
“The Cowboy’s Lament.”***

“The Bard of Armaugh”

Originally written as an Irish drover ballad, “*The Bard of Armaugh*,” is thought to be about Patrick Donnelly, made Bishop of Dromore in 1697 C.E., the same year as the issuance of the Bishops Banishment Act: An Act for banishing all Papists exercising any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and all Regulars of the Papist Clergy out of this Kingdom: an Act of the Parliament of Ireland (citation 9 Will iii c. 1): one of a series of penal laws, as opposed to civil laws (which seek to redress private wrongs), and in some jurisdictions distinct from criminal law, enforced by the State in its own name, imposing penalties for violation. All bishops of the Roman Catholic Church were banished from Ireland, to protect the official state church, the Church of Ireland.

“*The Bard of Armaugh*” later mutated into “*A Handful of Laurel*,” about a man dying of syphilis in a London hospital and musing back on his days in alehouses and whorehouses. Immigrants settling in the Appalachians *also* brought a version, “*The Unfortunate Rake*,” which was sung as early as 1790 C.E.; about a young soldier dying of mercury poisoning, a result of the treatment for venereal disease – syphilis – who

requests a military funeral. There is no known early copy of “*The Unfortunate Rake*,” believed to be originally known from a collection of Irish tunes published by Smollet Holden, c. 1805 C.E.: it is in “*Crosby’s Irish Musical Repository*,” (1808).

The countless songs of “*The Unfortunate Rake*” family all share a description of the funeral. The earliest known copy of the song is “*The Buck’s Elegy*,” c. 1800 C.E. – the pills are in it *in the line*: “I’d took pila cotia, all sorts of white mercury ...”² This song found its way to the cowboy camps & campfires across the west.

“*One night with Venus and a lifetime with Mercury.*”

Only a handful of the traditional texts have been as graphically frank in their commentary on the cause of the young man’s demise (as that as syphilis). Later texts tended to treat the matter obliquely, or have rationalized the situation by having death caused by other, usually more violent, means as in “*The Streets of Laredo*” – Harry Jackson learned a Wyoming variant in the summer of 1938. This recording may also be heard as part of the album, “*The Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads, & Brag Talk*” (Folkways FH 5723).

A Negro version, “*St. James Hospital*,” from Texas, is ostensibly a cowboy ballad, but it should properly be considered a unique form of “*The Unfortunate Rake*” ballad, separate & distinct from “*The Streets of Laredo*” variants. As examination of the text reveals traces of earlier forms of the ballad not usually found in the more common cowboy versions: the setting is the St. James Hospital of British broadside texts []; the dying man calls for his parents to sit with him, and complains of various aches & of a broken heart – elements found most frequently in versions of “*The Bad Girl’s Lament*.”

More than a simple change of sex is made in the transformation from a ballad about a misguided male ‘rake’ (or soldier or sailor) to that of a young girl ‘gone wrong’: in the instance of each of the three male characters, the funeral ceremony requested by the dying one is a totally military one, and no request is made for the death-bed visitors. In the ‘bad girl’ version the death march is more conventional, though still retaining military overtones, and death-bed communicants (preacher, doctor, mother) are asked for.

“*Bright Summer Morning*,” a West Indies variant of “*The Bad Girl’s Lament*” was brought to the Virgin Islands by British colonizers during the 19th century, when, for a short time, England took over control of the Islands from Denmark. A version, sung by Mrs. Viola Penn (to her own guitar accompaniment), was collected by Van Dam & T. Combs on St.-Thomas, Virgin Islands, in Nov. 1953 C.E.

² ***Pills of White Precipitated Mercury*** (Percipiate of Sublimate of Mercury) Mercurammonium chloride (HgNH₂Cl): much older than “*The Unfortunate Rake*,” ointments of white mercury were originally used as a cure for syphilis – the Great Pox – as early as c. 1510, being cited as a standard treatment for syphilis in Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia: An Universal Dictionary of the Arts & Sciences* ... London, 1752 (under Venereal Disease). Recurring lesions of syphilis called *gummas* can attack different places in the body, including mucous membranes. Distinguishing between two chlorides of mercury, Calomel (Hg₂Cl₂) & corrosive sublimate (HgCl₂), Calomel is still around: there was serious disagreement among doctors about the use (or misuse) of Calomel at the period of the War of 1812 & earlier. Dosing with mercurial curatives, including Calomel, could produce sore mouth, bleedings gums, profuse salivation, the loss of teeth, caries in the jawbone & open sores – literally holes an inch in diameter or more – thru the nose, cheek, or under the jaw of the patient ... “a hole in his *boozen*.”



A black and white photograph of Tom Mix riding a white horse. The horse is rearing up on its hind legs. Tom Mix is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers with a large, ornate belt buckle. He is holding the reins with his left hand and has his right arm raised. The background is a plain, light color.

TOM MIX

and
the Scourge
of Paradise
Valley

THE
BIG BIG
BOOK

The Cowboys

“I wish I could find words to express the trueness, the bravery, the hardihood, the sense of honor, the loyalty to their trust and to each other of the old trail hands.”

Charles Goodnight³



General Pancho Villa in the entrance of Ojinaga

First chronicled by the famous western writer, Zane Grey, in his 1934 novel “*The Code of the West*,” no written code ever actually existed. The ‘Code of the West’ was concentrated into the code of the range – and not all of it by any means depended upon the six-shooter. No one can comprehend this code without knowing something about the code of the Old South, whence the Texas cowboy came.⁴

³ “When we were far from the ranches – as daylight paled, I cooked over ‘his’ turds and scrub brush, and when I’d partaken of my hardtack and beans and salted-back-bacon, I whistled a merry old song of the trail.” On the vast prairie where firewood was often scarce, cow-chips were regularly used for fires. Camp cooks relied on them, as when they were dry, they made a hot fire. Of course the burning chips gave off an unsavory smell, but, thankfully, it did not affect the food. One old range cook who used his hat for a bellows claimed that in one season he “wore out three good hats trying to get the damned things to burn.”

Charles Goodnight, on his first cattle drive to Colorado invented the “chuck-wagon” by revamping an Army surplus wagon. Devising the cowboy version of meals on wheels, the wagon was complete with compartments for bacon, beans, coffee, spices, flour, and liquor.

⁴ Chapter XXI: Range Life – Cowboys, Cattle, Sheep; “*Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*,” by J. Frank Dobie. [www.worldwideschool.org]

“I was happy in the midst of dangers and inconveniences.”

Daniel Boone⁵

Pre-1845 Texas⁶ was a different place before the swarm of southern whites changed the ethnic balance; Anglo Texas had its roots in Southern, not Western, culture. (On December 16, 1826 C.E., Benjamin Edwards rode into Mexican-controlled Nacogdoches, Texas, and proclaimed himself the ruler of the Republic of Fredonia. Edwards negotiated an agreement with the Cherokee people offering to share Texas in exchange for their help in defense against the Mexican soldiers. Six weeks later, Edwards’ ill-planned revolution disintegrated and he fled to the United States for sanctuary.⁷)



A close-up of one side of the Cenotaph: (*Featured here are Travis & Crockett.*)

⁵ In 1820 C.E., Daniel Boone died at a relative’s home on the Missouri frontier in at the age of eighty-five.

⁶ On February 24, 1836 C.E., the Alamo was attacked by Mexican forces and all of its more than 180 defenders were slain, including William Travis, Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett. Texans under Sam Houston defeat the Mexican army and captured General Santa Anna at the battle of San Jacinto; and Texas became a Republic. [Legends of America: A Travel Site for the Nostalgic and Historic Minded: Old West Legends: Time Line of the Old West. [www.legendsofamerica.com]]

⁷ Legends of America: A Travel Site for the Nostalgic and Historic Minded: Old West Legends: Time Line of the Old West. [www.legendsofamerica.com]

The first settlers were slaveholding planters or would-be slave-owners – both, white and black. Texans referred to the then 27 States of the Union as ‘the Nation.’ The latest white settlers were the persecuted Irish Catholics who earlier gradually accepted from the Mexican Government refuge from the British land-thieves who had stolen their Nation, enslaved the people and outlawed – under penalty of death – the Catholic religion.



1912 re-enactment of a pioneer wagon train in Utah

The states across the Mississippi were much farther away than the Indian territories, which were athwart⁸ to the cattle-trails. Young Indians from the Indian Nation sought work throughout cattle country on drives that brought cattle to the reservations set up by the government in the Dakotas, as well as to ranches in the northwestern United States and western Canada.

“All this country needs is a little more water and a better class of people to move in,” said a newcomer near Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The cowboy he was talking to grinned and responded, “Yeah, they say that’s all Hell needs.”

The Cowboy originated in ‘Llano Estacado’ – the dry, treeless plains of Texas and New Mexico, also called the ‘Staked Plains.’ The Texas cowboy, along with the Texas cowman, was an evolvment from and a blend of the riding, shooting, frontier-formed southerner, the Mexican-Indian horseback worker with livestock (the vaquero), and the Spanish open-range rancher. The blend was not in blood, but in occupational techniques.

⁸ In 1838 C.E., the Five Civilized Nations of Indians were moved to the Indian Territory, or Oklahoma Territory – opened to settlement in 1889.



The LS Outfit at the Chuck Wagon Having Dinner in the Shade of a Tree. LS Ranch, Texas. 1907.

The driving of millions of cattle and horses from Texas to stock the whole plains area of North America while, following the Civil War, it was being denuded of buffaloes and secured from Indian domination, enabled the Texas cowboy to set his impress upon the whole ranching industry.

The Cowboys lived a hard and dangerous life. Only special people with special talents & characteristics could live in such a world. During the Cowboy Era (1866-1886)⁹ one sixth of the cowboys were Mexican, and many others were African-American or Native American. The cowboy became the best-known occupational type that America has given the world: it was very difficult working 18-hour days. Most cowboys were young men who learned on the job. They had small or medium physical frames, as large men were too heavy to ride mustangs. Just as 'Colonel (Samuel) Colt' – with Texas Ranger Captain Sam Walker – made all men equal in a fight, the horse made all men equal in swiftness and mobility. (The Colt Peacemaker, the weapon that became known as 'the gun that won the West' was a .45-caliber manufactured by Colt's Fire Arms Manufacturing Company in Hartford, Connecticut in 1873. At the time it sold for \$17.00.)

⁹ There were about 45,000 working cowboys during the heydays of the cattle drives. Of those, some 5,000 were African American.

Mexican vaqueros first taught American cowboys the difficult skills of taming wild horses, rounding up wild longhorns, breeding, roping, branding, and driving the herds. During the 1870s-80s, some 40,000 cow-punchers, 5,000 of whom were African Americans, transported some 10 million cattle to market.

“If you’re gonna drive cattle through town, do it on Sunday.
There’s little traffic and people are more prayerful and less disposed to
cuss at you.”



Trail Herd Watering, photochrom by Detroit Publishing Co., 1905

“Any time a large herd moves through a civilized area there’s a lot
of shit to clean up.”

This was a dirty, dangerous, and monotonous task, and the only way to drive cattle fast is slowly. In the saddle from dawn to dusk every day, with two-hour shifts every night, cowboys made the trip from southern Texas across the plains to the Kansas railheads in two to six months. The constant risk of death or injury from wild stampedes, extreme weather of all sorts, tricky river crossings, and attacks by rustlers made the cowboys tough and forceful men. Although these livestock herders were marginal participants in fighting the Mexicans, exterminating the buffalo, and annihilating American Indians, they must be differentiated from such other western types as lawmen,

outlaws, gunfighters, soldiers, and hunters. The cowboys, 'to the manner born,' were workers,¹⁰ not killers.

"A heap of people need a heap of killing."

Alfred Henry Lewis, "*The Old Cattleman*"

Between the killer and the cowboy standing up for his rights or merely shooting out the lights for fun, plenty of six-shooter play is to be found in most of the books about old-time cowboys; yet hardly one of the professional bad men was a representative cowboy. Bad men of the West and cowboys alike wore six-shooters and spurs; they drank each other's coffee; they had a fanatical passion for liberty – for themselves. But the representative cowboy was a reliable hand, hanging through drought, blizzard, and high water to his herd, whereas the bona fide 'long-rider' bad man, who usually had to stay in the saddle for extended periods of time while on the dodge.

Of course, the elements were mixed in the worst of the bad men, as they are in the best of all good men. No matter what deductions analysis may lead to, the fact remains that the western bad men of open range days have become a part of the American tradition. They represent six-shooter culture at its zenith – a stage between receding bowie knife individualism of the backwoods and blackguard, machine-gun gangsterism of the city.

"Pistols are almost as numerous as men. It is no longer thought to be an affair of any importance to take the life of a fellow being."

Nathan A. Baker,
Cheyenne Leader, October 1868



Henry Starr

¹⁰ Cowboys driving cattle to the market could expect to make between \$25 and \$40 per month. A Trail Boss might make as much as \$125 per month.

After robbing a bank, Henry Starr walked three miles out of town and was eating supper at a farmer's house when the telephone rang.¹¹ When the farmer answered it, he turned to Starr and said, "The sheriff says the bank was held up and he wants to know if I've seen a suspicious character out this way."

To this, Starr responded: "Tell him the robber is at your house eating supper and for him to come on out and get me." With that, he finished his meal, paid for it, and left.

The rowdy, nomadic cowboy occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder in a supposedly classless West, which was in fact controlled by Eastern (or even European) financiers, cattle barons, railroad magnates, politicians, and speculators. The itinerant cowboys were really cogs in an industrial machine, moving cattle toward their final destination, the Eastern cities, where a new immigrant working class needed beef to fuel their work in the horrific post-Civil War factories and sweatshops.¹²



Besides herding cattle, cowboys also had jobs like branding new cattle and castrating and dehorning older cattle to be taken to market and roundups. The longest and most challenging route was the Western Trail between Texas and Montana. During the great cattle drives, a single herd might consist of 2500 head of cattle, and be attended to by only 8 to 10 cowboys with some wranglers to take care of their 'remuda' – of horses: cowboys would ride a string of horses depending on what task was at hand; a mild horse would be used at night and a quick horse would be used for cattle roping and tending.

The cowboy's philosophy¹³ was common in its simplicity; honesty was not something to should flirt with – "You should be married to it."

You can judge a man by the hoss he rides. There never was a horse that couldn't be rode, there never was a rider that couldn't be throwed. When you climb into the saddle, you'd better be prepared to ride, and there's a whole lot more to riding a horse than sitting in the saddle, letting your feet hang down. If your horse doesn't want to go there, neither do you.

¹¹ The telephone was invented in 1876. The first community to have a telephone after the White House telephone was installed was Deadwood, South Dakota.

¹² "The Dreary Life of the Cowboy: Memoir and Myth in Cowboy Ballads" by E. Martin Pedersen: [Institute of Foreign Languages and Literature, University of Messina, Italy. This article was first presented in a workshop on "Comparing English and American Myths" at the 1995 Conference of the Italian Association for English Studies.]

¹³ Legends of America: A Travel Site for the Nostalgic and Historic Minded: Old West Legends: Old West Wisdom. [www.legendsofamerica.com]

There are more horses asses than horses, and a smart ass just doesn't fit in the saddle. Polishing your pants on saddle leather don't make you a rider. If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then, to make sure it's still there with ya.

Solving problems is like throwing cattle. Dig your heels on the big ones and grab the little ones 'round the neck. Tossin' your rope before buildin' a loop don't ketch the calf. Go after life as if it's something that's got to be roped in a hurry before it gets away. Sometimes you get and sometimes you get got. (Confidence was the feeling you had before you understand the situation, and being too positive in your opinions could get you invited to a dance ... in the street, to the music of shots, nicely aimed. Don't interfere with something that ain't botherin' you none. When in doubt, let your horse figure it out.)

Speak your mind, but ride a fast horse. Some men talk because they have something to say. Others, cause they got to say something. And the length of a conversation doesn't tell anything about the size of the intellect. Genius has its limits. Stupidity knows no bounds. So, talk low, talk slow, and don't say too much. Wide open spaces don't breed no chatterboxes. Never miss a good chance to shut up. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer. More-so, you don't need decorated words to make your meaning clear. Say it plain and save some breath for breathing.

Don't worry about biting off more than you can chew. Your mouth is probably a whole lot bigger than you think. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment. The only substitute for good manners is fast reflexes. It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge. Forgive your enemies. It messes with their heads.

(After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: "When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut.")

ii

The cowboys, never referred to themselves or each other as cowboys, they were cow hands or bronco busters¹⁴ or saddle tramps ... an exclusive community that lived a poor life, mostly outdoors, having unconsciously developed their own code of laws which were not formally written down, consisting of: hospitality and assistance to others, [] a dislike for bragging or complaining, praise for bravery, and pride in skill with horse, rope and gun.

Ramon Adams, a Western historian, explained it best in his 1969 book, *"The Cowman and His Code of Ethics,"* saying, in part:

¹⁴ A cowboy who could tame wild horses: contrary to popular thinking, not all cowboys could ride just any horse, though most could ride any broken mount. But the bronc buster, also called a '*bonc-peeler*' and a '*bronc breaker*,' was a breed apart. These men, with a special type of 'horse sense' earned not only the esteem of the other cowboys, but usually better wages. []

“Back in the days when the cowman with his herds made a new frontier, there was no law on the range. Lack of written law made it necessary for him to frame some of his own, thus developing a rule of behavior which became known as the ‘Code of the West.’ These homespun laws, being merely a gentleman’s agreement to certain rules of conduct for survival, were never written into statutes, but were respected everywhere on the range.”

Though the cowman might break every law of the territory, state and federal government, he took pride in upholding his own unwritten code. His failure to abide by it did not bring formal punishment, but the man who broke it became, more or less, a social outcast. His friends ‘hazed him into the cutbacks’ and he was subject to the punishment of the very code he had broken.

According to Richard M. Dorson (1973), some of the generic qualities of the cowboys were: i) true cowboys were expected to possess a love of horses, heroic courage and independence, freedom & adventure, & loyalty to the outfit; ii) skilled horsemen, they assumed that workers on the ground (sheep-herders, farmers, railroad men) belonged to a lesser breed; iii) given to the task of tending cattle, they were supposed to have endurance ... & not complain; and, iv) they were generally reticent because they tended to mind their own business.¹⁵

(Again, their philosophies were simple: “After weeks of beans and taters, even a change to taters and beans is good.” Or, “Use it up, wear it out, make do or do without.” Or yet, “The biggest trouble-maker you’ll probably ever have to deal with watches you shave his face in the mirror every morning.”)



“Shoot first and never miss.”
Bat Masterson

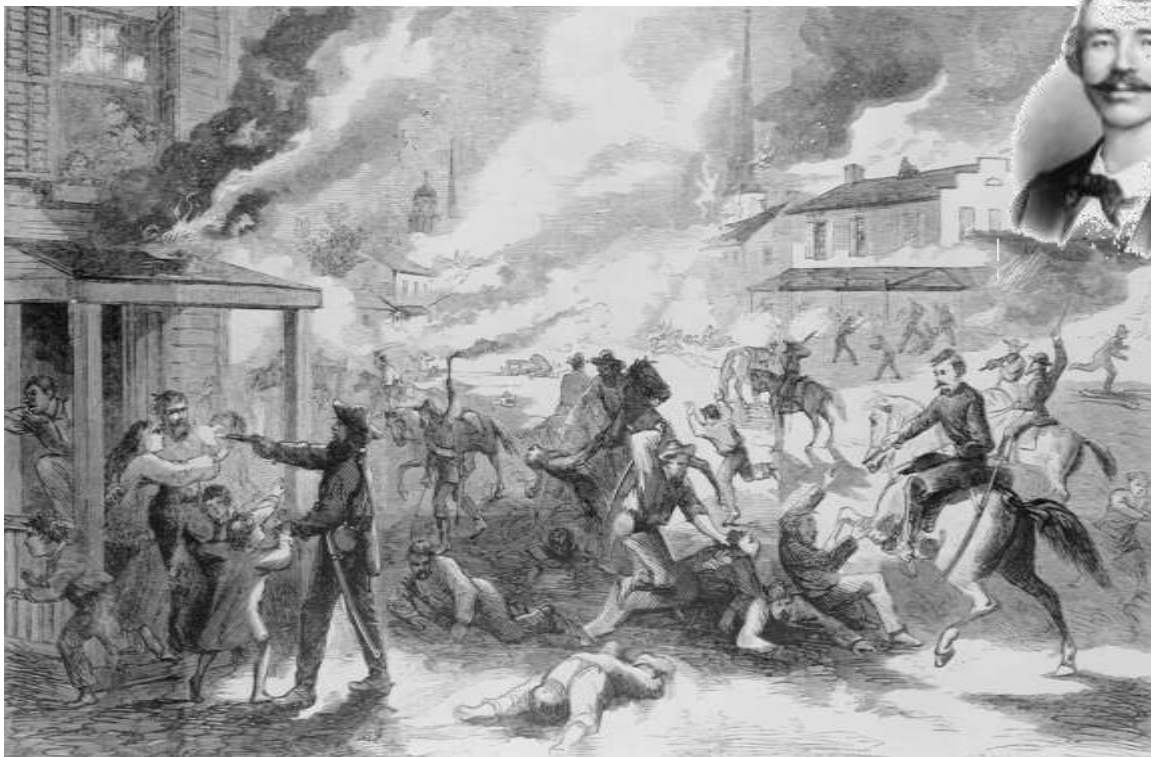
¹⁵ “The Myth of the American Cowboys: Idealized Heroes of the West” by Hirmawan Wijanarka.

Contrary to popular thought, most cowboys didn't shoot up the many towns that they arrived in, as most of them didn't carry guns while they were riding. Carrying a gun was a nuisance to the riders that scared both the cows and the horses. Cowboys traveled light, and stored their meager worldly possessions in a 'war sack,' or 'yannigan bag' – inside was generally everything the cowboy owned, typically his pistol and ammunition, an extra set of clothes, spare parts for equipment, playing cards – called 'bible,' a bill of sale for his horse (if purchased other than captured wild and broken), and maybe a harmonica or a few precious letters.

Of the long-tailed heroes of the revolver, who often did society a service in shooting each other: about 1/3 of all gunmen died of 'natural causes,' living a normal life span of 70 years or so; and, of those who did die violently (shot or executed), the average age of death was age 35.

The gunfighters-turned-lawmen lived longer lives than their persistently criminal counterparts. Nor can the bad men be logically segregated from the long-haired killers on the side of the law, like Wild Bill Hickok and Wyatt Earp, W. H. Hudson once advanced the theory that bloodshed and morality go together.¹⁶

“When a bad man dies he either goes to hell or the Pecos.”



The Lawrence Massacre, also known as Quantrill's Raid - Friday, 21 August 1863

¹⁶ Chapter XXIV: The Bad Man Tradition; “*Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*,” by J. Frank Dobie. [www.worldwideschool.org]

On November 24, 1835, the Republic of Texas established a force of frontiersmen called the 'Texas Rangers.' The rangers were paid \$1.25 per day for their services. The members of The Texas Rangers were said to be able to 'ride like a Mexican, shoot like a Kentuckian, and fight like the devil.'

When a group of rowdy outlaws went on a terror in a Texas town, shooting out the lights and windows, killing several citizens, the town quickly requested help from the Texas Rangers to come and quell the 'riot.' When Pat Dooling arrived and stepped off the train, the town officials immediately looked around for the other rangers.

"I'm the ranger," said Dooling.

The towns folk asked, "Did they only send 'one' ranger?"

To which, Dooling responded: "You've only got one riot, haven't you?"

He soon quelled the riot and boarded the next train.

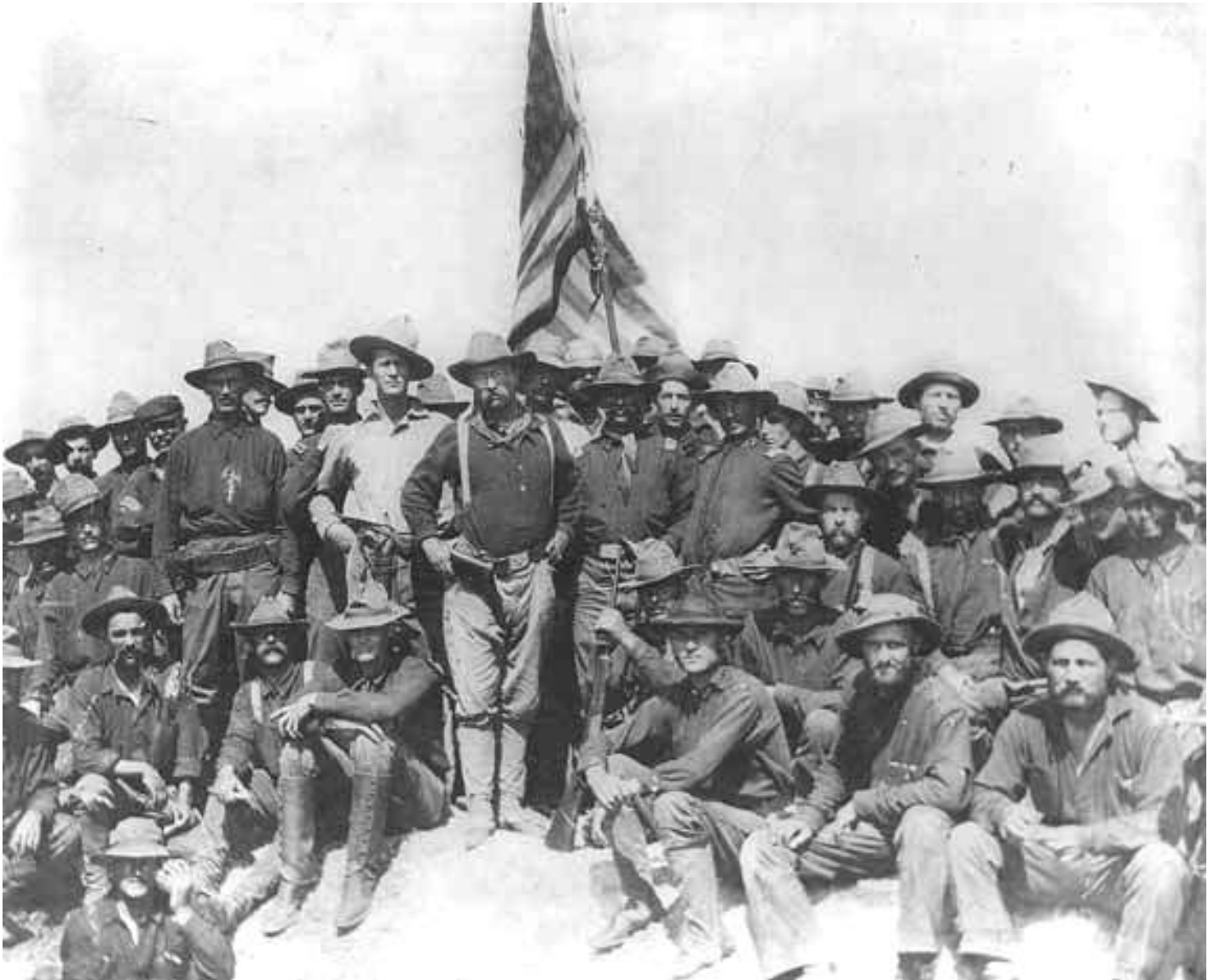


Texas Rangers

Outlaws and bad men were called 'long riders,' and to the Texas Ranger which followed them "belly'n through the brush," according to his own proverb, they were 'no better than their horses.' Booted sheriffs from Brownsville on the Rio Grande to the Hole in the Wall in the Big Horn Mountains lived in the saddle.

“We are rough men and used to rough ways.”

Bob Younger - to a newspaper reporter
following the 1876 Northfield raid¹⁷



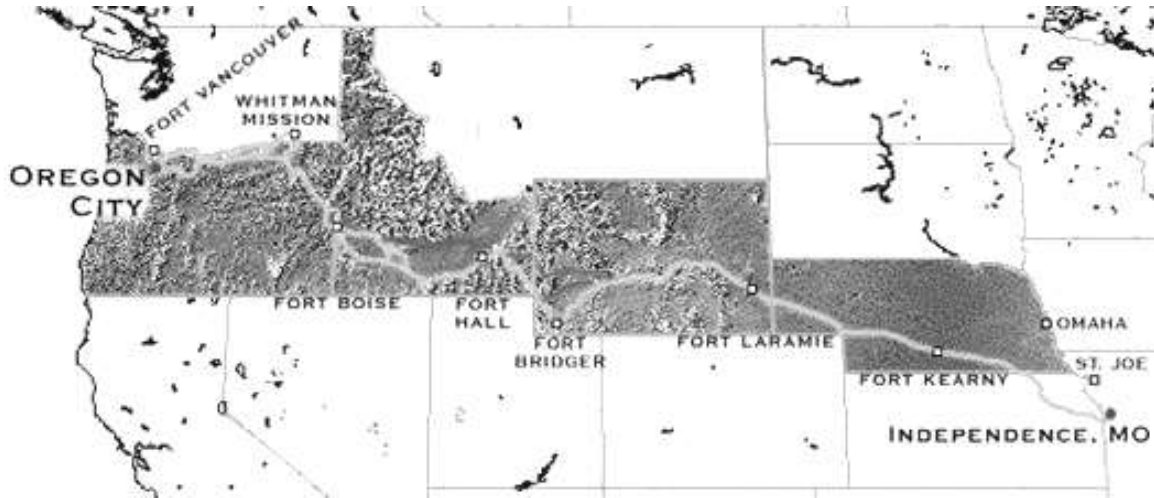
***Then Lieutenant Colonel, US Army Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders
at the top of the hill, Battle of San Juan, during the Spanish-American War.***

¹⁷ On August 21, 1863 C.E., six years before the start of the Civil War, in the ongoing Kansas/Missouri Border War, William Clark Quantrill and his band of ruthless raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas, burning the town to the ground and killing more than 180 men and boys. Quantrill's confederates fled at the sound of approaching Union troops. On September 7, 1876 C.E., a bloody battle ensued in Northfield, Minnesota, when the James Younger gang tries to rob the First National Bank, two members died, Cole Younger was shot 11 times but managed to survive. Frank and Jesse James and four others escaped. (Frank and Jesse James learned their methods of gunmanship and murder under the command of William Quantrill.)

iii

“A pioneer is a man who turned all the grass upside down, strung bob-wire over the dust that was left, poisoned the water, cut down the trees, killed the Indian who owned the land and called it progress.”

Charles M. Russell



The saga of the Old West is filled with tales of adventure with pioneers roving the plains seeking the unknown in the vast territorial lands west of the Mississippi River. Among these pioneers were identifiable contingents of African Americans [] at a time when the American government’s major quest was to fulfill its Manifest Destiny. The Old West represented a new home, a new beginning, and a new opportunity to enjoy freedom, but it also identifies many hardships, economic and political, and unfamiliar social challenges. The Old West was both, quixotic and inclusive: Indians, outlaws, migrants, and missionaries, all had their reason for roaming the plains of the Old West. But, climactic of all the riders rode the cowboy, who lived with horse and herd.

“It was a land of vast silent spaces, of lonely rivers, and of plains where the wild game stared at the passing horseman. It was a land of scattered ranches, of ... long-horned cattle, and of reckless riders who unmoved, looked in the eyes of life or death.”

Theodore Roosevelt,
“*An Autobiography*,” 1913

The life of cowboys reached its golden period during the 1870s & 1880s (which was characterized by long, gigantic cattle-drives, immense herds being driven 4000 miles from Texas to the north – (Johnson, 1999: 517) – and began to die out in the mid-1890s after the disastrous winter of 1886-7 shocked the cattle industry. An increase of settlers stringing barbed-wire fences along the trail routes (enabling people to breed cattle), the rapid growth of railroads, and the increase of the stock industry in the Northern cities – (Dorson, 1973: 128) – all contributed to the demise of the Old West cowboy.

“No cowboy ever quit¹⁸ while his life was hardest and his duties were most exacting.”

J. Frank Dobie,
“A Vaquero of the Brush Country,” 1929



iv

The Ghost Dance movement first appeared among the Paiute on reservations in Nevada. Participants believed in the imminent return of the dead and the buffalo, the disappearance of the white man, and the return of the land to the natives. This led to the Paiute Massacre of 1870 C.E., in which over half of the tribe was killed by settlers.¹⁹

“In 1883 C.E., Tatank-I-yo-tatanka (Sitting Buffalo) [], was a guest of honor at the opening ceremonies for the Northern Pacific Railroad. When it was his turn to speak, he said in the Lakota language, ‘I hate all white people. You are thieves and liars. You have taken away our land and made us outcasts.’ A quick-thinking interpreter told the crowd the chief was happy to be there and that he looked forward to peace and prosperity with the white people.

Sitting Buffalo received a standing ovation.”



¹⁸ “There’s no place ’round the campfire for a quitter’s blanket.”

¹⁹ Legends of America: A Travel Site for the Nostalgic and Historic Minded: Old West Legends: Time Line of the Old West. [www.legendsofamerica.com]

Around 1900 the cowboy and Indian era suffered the same fate, ending abruptly – the trail drives were stopped by the barbed-wire fences²⁰ of the encroaching settlers, and the Indians, defeated in the Indian wars of the 1890s, were secured on reservations. Though Texas cowboys continued tending cattle and kept their ranches, their role was no longer the most prominent in the cattle industry.

“The best way to get a cowboy to do something is to suggest he is too old for it.”

Nevertheless, the American cowboy – the last frontiersman – represents a unique period of social transition that witnessed: a reuniting of North and South after the Civil War; a geographical movement from East to West: a population shift from rural to urban: a declaration of cultural independence from Europe; the emergence of the nation on the world stage; and a lifestyle change from the rigors of frontier existence to a more sedentary life of second-hand adventures.²¹



In the Old West the phrase ‘left afoot’ meant nothing short of being left flat on your back:

“A man on foot is no man at all.”

²⁰ Barbed wire, a fencing material made of twisted wire with spaced coiled barbs, turned the open plains of the West into enclosed pastures and forever changed the society and economy of the region; the invention of Illinois farmer Joseph Farwell Glidden, who received his patent in November 24, 1874. Ranchers could now isolate their cattle and control breeding.

²¹ “*The Dreary Life of the Cowboy: Memoir and Myth in Cowboy Ballads*” by E. Martin Pedersen: [Institute of Foreign Languages and Literature, University of Messina, Italy. This article was first presented in a workshop on “Comparing English and American Myths” at the 1995 Conference of the Italian Association for English Studies.]

If an enemy could not take a man's life, the next best thing was to take his horse. Where cow thieves went free, horse thieves were hanged, and to say that a man was 'as common as a horse thief' was to express the nadir of commonness. The pillow of the frontiersmen who slept with a six-shooter under it was a saddle, and hitched to the horn was the loose end of a stake rope.²²

"We never did hang the wrong one but once or twice, and them fellers needed to be hung anyhow jes' on general principles."²³

A nameless judge in the Old West



The *Singing* Cowboy: Horse and Ballad.

"Wearing gloves and button-fly jeans means you better think ahead."

With the advent of the horse, the ways and the psychology of the Plains Indians entered into 'the Age of Horse Culture,' which dominated the West and Southwest almost until the automobile. Astride horses introduced by the conquistadores to the Americas, the Plains Indians became almost a separate race from the foot-moving tribes of the East and the stationary Pueblos of the Rockies. The earliest American explorers and trappers

²² Chapter XXIII: Horses: Mustangs and Cow Ponies; "*Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*," by J. Frank Dobie. [www.worldwideschool.org]

²³ "After a horse thief had been arrested and tried, he was found innocent by a jury. When they filed back into the courtroom and the foreman stated the verdict, he liked the sound of his voice so much it took him over an hour of fancy talking to tell the court that the defendant had been found innocent of all charges. When he was finally done pontificating, the judge shook his head and said: "You'll have to reconsider, the defendant was hung a couple of hours ago."

Or, comparably, as in this tale, a Texas cowboy was arrested for stealing a horse, he pleaded not guilty at his trial. When his lawyer managed to get him off and he was set free by the judge, he started to leave the courtroom. Suddenly he turned around and looked at the judge with puzzlement before asking: "Judge, does this mean I can keep the hoss?"

of both Plains and Rocky Mountains went out in the saddle; the first industrial link between the East and the West was a mounted pack train beating out the Santa Fe Trail; on west beyond the end of this trail, in Spanish California, even the drivers of oxen rode on horseback; the first transcontinental express was the Pony Express.

*I wear a bandanna, my spurs are of silver, my pony is gray-dappled:
and while riding the ranges my luck never changes,
with foot in the stirrup I gallop for aye. I gallop for aye – aye:
with foot in the stirrup I gallop for aye.*

Whoopie-kiyi-yi-aye



Tex Ritter

(The Pony Express was in operation for only nineteen months from April 1860 through October 1861. The Pony Express carried almost 35,000 pieces of mail over more than 650,000 miles during those nineteen months and lost only one mail sack. The typical Pony Express rider was nineteen years old and made \$100-\$150 per month plus room and board.)

“Away across the endless dead level of the prairie a black speck appears against the sky. In a second or two it becomes a horse and rider ... and the flutter of the hooves comes faintly to the ear; in another instant, a man and horse burst past our excited faces, and go winging away like a belated fragment of a storm.”

An observer,
'on the passing of a Pony Express Rider'



Alonso de Ovalle's 1646 engraving of the conquistadores García Hurtado de Mendoza, Pedro de Villagra and Rodrigo de Quiroga

Spanish conquistadores first saddled their horses in Vera Cruz and rode until they had mapped the continents from the Horn to Montana and from the Floridas to the harbors of the Californias. The padres with them rode on horseback, too, and made every mission a horse ranch. The national dance of Mexico, the “*Jarabe*,” is an interpretation of the clicking of hoofs and the pawing and prancing of spirited horses that the Aztecs noted when the Spaniards came. Likewise, the cowboy songs are rhymed to the walk of horses.²⁴

“Ridin’ a bronc is like dancin’ with a girl. The trick is matchin’
yer partner’s rhythm.”

Many cowboy ballads originated as a means of quieting stampede-prone cattle at night. Composed impromptu by cowhands riding around the herds, the often atonal songs took their rhythm from a horse’s gait. Some had mournful tunes, but no words, and were termed “Texas lullabies.” There is no evidence that real cowboy’s yodeled, although some of the calls they used in herding cattle might have sounded similar to yodeling. “*Whoopie-Ti-Yi-Yo*,” one of the oldest and best known of the old-time cowboy songs, is modeled on an old Irish piece, “*Rocking the Cradle*.” (References to this song appear in the writings of Owen Wister and Andy Adams, describing life on the cattle drives. It was included in John Lomax’s 1910 edition of “*Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*” and in Carl Sandburg’s 1927 “*American Songbag*.”)

Like other true cowboy songs, it describes the work of the cowboys and gives us insight into the business of driving cattle. The lonesome wail of the “cattle call” imparted a feeling of mournful isolation; the purpose of the call was to let the cattle know the herders were there, so they would not be startled, and also to let the other night herders know the singer’s location with respect to the herd.

In camp, they enjoyed long ballads around the circle. Jules Verne Allen was born in 1883, in Ellis County, Texas. He began ranch work at age ten and became an experienced cowboy, participating in long trail drives. He learned to play the guitar and often performed for his fellow ranch hands. As he began to perform professionally, he brought his songs from the cow camps to radio stations: WFFA in Dallas and WFI and KNX in Los Angeles. In 1928 he began to record for Victor. Allen, along with Charles Nabell and Carl T. Sprague, is one of the most important of the early, authentic, singing cowboys. He died in 1945.

Rodeo rider and stuntman, Francis Henry Maynard, another one of the more authentic singing cowboys, recorded eight songs for Columbia in 1930. In the 1934 film, “*In Old Santa Fe*,” he introduced Gene Autry to movie audiences. His singing was rustic when compared to the warbling of Gene Autry (or Roy Rogers), nevertheless he was a well-known movie cowboy for two decades. He died in 1973.

Once the cattle were delivered, the more uninhibited cowboys went to town to drink, fight, gamble, dance and carouse with prostitutes, wasting all their pay in just a few days. In this practice, they resembled sailors on shore leave: “Work like you don’t need money and dance like no one is watching.”

²⁴ Chapter XXIII: Horses: Mustangs and Cow Ponies; “*Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*,” by J. Frank Dobie. [www.worldwideschool.org]

“The Cowboy’s Lament”

In the relative isolation of the long trail drives, cowboys found they had to provide their own entertainment. [] Most cowboys probably knew at least snatches of songs, but not many could carry much of a tune. As with any group, there were some who were natural entertainers, who had better voices, and who accumulated a larger repertoire of songs. Most singing was rough and unaccompanied; while guitars might accompany a song back at the ranch, they did not really go on trail drives. The only instruments that found their way into a cowboy’s saddle bags were pocket-sized ones like the harmonica and Jews-harp, and perhaps an occasional fiddle.²⁵

After the Civil War, with the development of the cattle industry, ballads of the range became popular. Usually sung or recited, these ballads were orally transmitted, and the names of their author-composers were often lost. The same process occurred in Spanish verse along the Mexican border in South Texas, where corridos were composed, sung, and passed down from one generation to the next. Collecting cowboy ballads and corridos became a major occupation of scholars and folklorists in the twentieth century. Even the skillful and popular recitative piece “*Lasca*” (1882), at one time the best known of all Texas poems, was passed around and handed down orally. By the time it got into print, lines had been lost and the author identified only as Frank Desprez. Not until the 1950s was anything known about this Englishman, who was for three years ‘occupied on a Texas ranch’ before he returned to England and became a professional writer.

Cowboys were not an illiterate lot; many were relatively educated men, seeking adventure in the West, escaping from the past or simply from the pressures of civilization. Some of them wrote a great deal, and often, this verse became attached to old familiar folk or popular melodies and entered oral tradition as folk songs: (John I. White’s book “*Git Along Little Dogies*” is an excellent treatment of a number of these cowboy poet-songwriters).²⁶

Cowboy songs and ballads are generally ranked alongside Negro spirituals as being the most important of America’s contributions to folk song. As compared with the old English and Scottish ballads, the cowboy and all other ballads of the American frontiers generally sound cheap and shoddy. Since John A. Lomax brought out his collection in 1910, cowboy songs have found their way into scores of songbooks, have been recorded on hundreds of records, and have been popularized, often – and naturally – without any semblance to cowboy style, by thousands of radio singers. Two general anthologies are recommended especially for the cowboy songs they contain: “*American Ballads and Folk Songs*,” by John A. and Alan Lomax, Macmillan, New York, 1934; “*The American Songbag*,” by Carl Sandburg, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1927.²⁷

²⁵ New World Records: Back In the Saddle Again: American Cowboy Songs: The American Cowboy: Image And Reality by Charlie Seeman.

²⁶ New World Records: Back In the Saddle Again: American Cowboy Songs: The American Cowboy: Image And Reality by Charlie Seeman.

²⁷ Chapter XXII: Cowboy Songs and Other Ballads; “*Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*,” by J. Frank Dobie. [www.worldwideschool.org]

The best-known pieces reflecting pioneer or prairie life (for the old western cowboy), “*O Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie*” and “*The Dying Cowboy*,” or “*The Cowboy’s Lament*,” are cowboy adaptations of an earlier composed song which had entered into sea song tradition, “*The Ocean Burial*.” Written by the Reverend Edwin H. Chapin, the song begins: “Oh, bury me not in the deep, deep sea ...” (published in 1839 and copyrighted in 1850 as the work of George N. Allen). It offers a classic example of the process of oral tradition transformed into a very different entity, localized in a new setting, with deep meaning for a whole and entirely different group of people. There are a number of recorded instances of individuals who at various times worked both a sailors and as cowboys: in the film, “*Jeremiah Johnson*,” Robert Redford portrays a sailor turned mountain man, and legend, and in the ‘spaghetti’ b-western, “*My Name is Nobody*,” Terrence Hill portrays ‘Nobody,’ a mischievous trickster guiding a quick-draw shootist, his idolized hero, first unto fame – against the notorious Wild Bunch – and then into anonymity (as a sailor bound for the Orient). [Compare Joseph Conrad, “*Lord Jim*.”]

Charles J. Finger, in his little 1923 booklet, “*Sailor Chanties and Cowboy Songs*,” gives some very interesting account of interaction between sailors and cowboys, of the way songs of one occupation would be swapped with songs of the other.

The earliest claim for authorship of “*The Cowboy’s Lament*” is in 1876, by Francis Henry Maynard. At that time he was working with ‘the Grimes outfit’ wintering cattle on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River on the Kansas-Indian Territory border. He claimed to be inspired by “*The Dying Girl’s Lament*” – at that time sung by cowboys – changing the lyrics to fit cowboy life as he knew it. He moved the scene from a hospital to Tom Sherman’s Barroom, a popular watering hole in Dodge City (“*The Whorehouse Bells are Ringing*,” Guy Logsdon, 1989, p. 291; University of Illinois Press). While Maynard, having taken out a copyright, is generally credited with the authorship, “*The Cowboy’s Lament*” appears in Jack Thorp’s “*Songs of the Cowboys*”: Thorp claims in a note to the poem: “Authorship is credited to Troy Hale, Battle Creek, Nebraska. I first heard it sung in a barroom at Wisner, Nebraska, about 1886.”

The traditional version was well-known by 1898, when Owen Wister included a verse in his great western novel “*Lin McLean*.” Throughout the years the locale was moved to Laredo, and the song became known as “*The Streets of Laredo*,” versions retaining terminology from “*The Unfortunate Rake*” – the narrative becoming confused with old Irish expressions dating back to “*The Bard of Armaugh*.”

Marty Robbins recorded the song in the 50s; Johnny Cash did a version of the song on his last album.

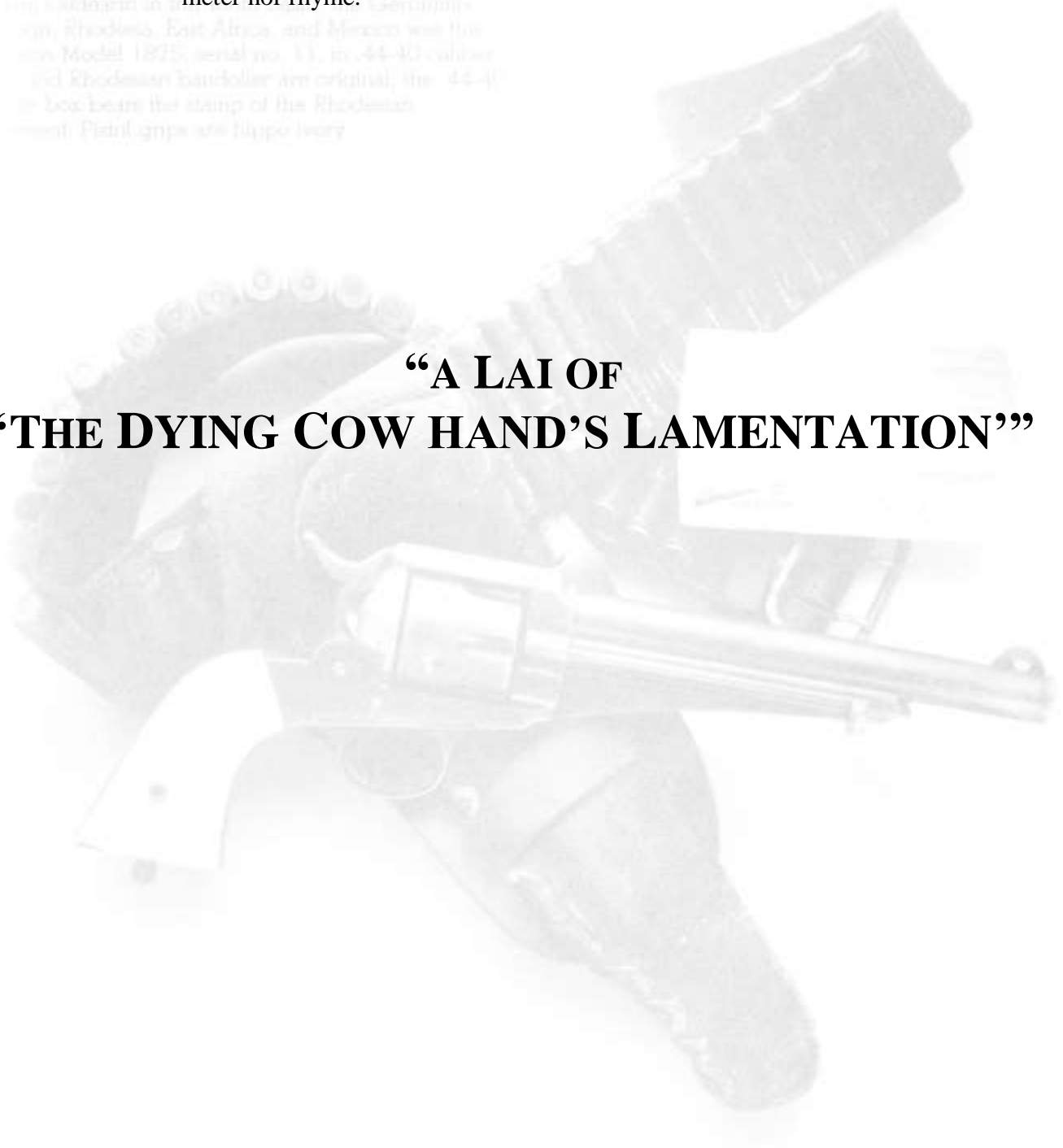




Dedicated
to
Miss Lily Langtree

A ballad is a story told in song which usually includes repetition, four-line stanzas and a rhyming pattern. “*The Dying Cow Hand’s Lamentation*” is composed, though, in free verse – with no established stanza sequence, neither meter nor rhyme.

“A LAI OF ‘THE DYING COW HAND’S LAMENTATION’”







“I’m a bullwacker far from home.
if you don’t like me just leave me alone;
eat my grub when hungry, drink when dry:
whack, punch, swar, then lay down and die.”

“THE DYING COW HAND’S LAMENTATION”

Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani.²⁸

I’m a rowdy cowboy just off the stormy plains,
my trade is girting kack and pulling bridle reins.
O I can tip the lasso; it is with graceful ease;
I can rope a streak of lightning, and ride it where I please.

Come *my dear friends* and a sad story I’ll plait:
O list *awhile* to the lai of a poor dying cow hand
and scorn not the pains of a poor dying boy.

*Come a ti yi yoopee
Ti yi ya!*

O it was quite early one *fine* morning
that I went *on down* ‘a *privy way*’ to Roy Bean’s –
to Roy Bean’s Dram-and-Dame House,

with a hey, & a ho, & a hey ninino

O I so *very* early *one* morning, came:
‘twas a *very* glorious spring morning,

hey ding a ding, ding

in the clear and bright mid-month of May:
from the woods bird-song so lovely, coolly wafting,
as if flower-fragrant, like a honey-scented breeze ...

as if flower-fragrant, like a honey-scented breeze ...

as if flower-fragrant, like a honey-scented breeze ...

and gladsome earth was all flesh clad in,
O, a frashing mantle of gristening glean.

²⁸ MATT 27:46: “My god, my god. Why hast thou forsaken me?” Cf., “... through the void space I walk between the sinful world & eternity! Beneath me burns eternal fire! O for a hand to pluck me forth!” (Wm. BLAKE, “*Couch of Death*”)

O so cold was *the* morning, and dewy wet *that* new day,
 as I strode *out* onto the street *down* by Roy Bean's –
 Roy Bean's Dram-and-Dame House:

Roy Bean's Dram-and-Dame House:

O as I strode *out* onto the street *down* by Roy Bean's.

'T was there, so very pale and fair, I espied
 a handsome young cow puncher with wavy blonde hair
 and two brown, sparkling eyes, lying there – and cruel was his fate.

A hole in his "*boozen*," his teeth were a-closin' ...
 and his tongue, all inflamed, hung o'er his chin:
 he whispered – so slowly – and quite lowly said, as I came by,
 "*Come sit ye here just one moment down by my side.*"

And heavy breathed he, his dull voice heaving:
 O heaving dull sobs – crying. Crying. Crying.

Bawdy merry-making and cold laughter could be heard
 coming from inside of Roy Bean's –
 from inside of Roy Bean's Dram-and-Dame House ...

... *willow, willow, willow!*
Sing, O the greene willow shall be my garland.
O willow, willow, willow!

The lawless wilderness is ruled by but one plain and simple truth,
 the quick ruled the dead – O the quick ruled the dead.
 The quick ruled the dead: and inside of Roy Bean's,
 double-dealing gamblers therein cheat at palming cards –
 and therein Lady Luck, her, no fortune wouldst she keep
 in the bottom-dealt hopes of the honest young tenderfeet.
 And the love in their eyes was by flash girls stolen,
 to be hidden away between their powder-pampered titties.

Now, the handsome young cow puncher was stretched out:
 there laid down on a slicker,
 all dressed up in his buckskins –
 all fit out in his buckskins – blood stained ... fit out for the grave:
 he was shot through the breast and left covered with his strewn cards –
 left lying in the dust all alone ... and there upon his forehead
 grim Death a hellish brand so cruelly put.

O his eyes were fast glazing. Death was quick approaching:
 and the handsome young cow puncher would soon be quite dead ...

O his white lips were curled and twisted.
 His white lips they trembled, tortured with pain:
 and he spake in a whisper, quite lowly,
 't was as if, soft-smiling, O he was remembering
 of some scene of a life long ago ... long ago ...
 for ever now far behind him in memory:
 of his home to the East which he'd never see again.

And spake he these words in passing, saying unto me,
*"I can see by your armour that you are a cow hand –
 a cow hand just like me!"*

Heigh ho, my heart is heavy.

O, these words he did say,
 and he was breathing quite heavily – O, he was breathing quite heavily.
 He was breathing quite heavy ...
 and his voice it was whispered – whispered so dull:
 and his lips were flame red.

"They done gunned me down ... and run off and left me
 here in the dust of the street
 outside of Roy Bean's ... just like I was dead – dead:
 just like I was dead – dead: just like I was dead.

O come wont you sit down here just by my side –
 come! listen and hear what I have to say:
 hear my sad life story ... I wish to give it to you
 I am shot in the breast and I know that I must die.
 Hell is my doom for²⁹ I know that I've done wrong.
 I know I've done wrong – wrong: and I'll soon be quite dead – dead.

I had a home once and a loving mother,
 so good and gentle to me, I had a darlin' sister,
 all my pride and joy, I loved her from her childhood for I had none else beside,
 I've loved her as a brother, an' with a brother's care
 I've tried through grief an' sorrow her gentle heart to cheer.
 But both did I leave for to wild wander.
 O I long ago left there to go ranging ...
 I wanted to range all of the world
 and traveled from Canādia to Old Mexico
 Now I must die – and so far away from them for e'er separated.
 Now I must die here alone outside of Roy Bean's –
 in the dust of the street ... with my cards.
 Now I must die ...

²⁹ Cf. *Duchess* 597: - for y am sowre & sowre ys y.

Go write me a letter to all of my brothers,
 and one, also, to my sister so dear. O so dear.
 But not one word of this do you mention:
 as y'all gather 'round me my sad story to hear:
 don't write to my mother, oh, please don't inform her
 of the wretched condition that death caught me in.
 I know it would grieve her at the loss of her darling firstborn son.
 O wish could I – O wish could I
 to my childhood return once again! O wish could I
 to my childhood, return and never leave ...

'T was once in the saddle *that* I use to go dashing,
 once in the saddle *that* I used to go happy, O, so gay;
 I *have* tried to live honest, tried to shoot square,
 and I've given all men *good as was* their due:³⁰
 but I *just* took up to drinking and card playing
 which brought me to trouble, and now I am through:
 got shot by a sneaky *bottom-dealing* gambler and his dirty *slut* whore:
and they left me here *alone in the cold growing darkness* –
and I it am dying *now here* all alone today.
 O a shot from a six-shooter took my *young* life away.

So cruel was the man that shot me in the breast ...
 he was cheating at dealing the cards **and I called him**.
 So cruel was my lady luck³¹ ... she was holding put my hand – *holding put my hand*:
 I might have applied to some friends that were near me;
 to save my poor life ... but before! now they were all gone - gone. O all were gone.

With that came out his paramour:
she was white as the lily flower.
Hey, troll, trollie, lollie.
With that came out her own dear knight;
he was true as ever for the fight.
Hey, troll, trollie, lollie, low.

My curse let it rest, let it rest on the fair one
 who *first* drove me *forth* far away from *my* home –
 O far from the family and friends that I loved.
 She told me *that* she loved me, just to deceive me.
 My curse *be it be* – may it rest upon her wherever she roam.³²

³⁰ Cf. APOC 22. 12,22.

MA'At - the CHRIST_{ALM} doth appear 'as *Quick BECOMING* *enthrones within you*.

³¹ Fortune is appointed by God as a trial to the just in prosperity & grief, leading man to turn from God either in delights of the world or in the world's adversity: cf. *Machiavelli's FORTUNA*.

O she was fair. O she was lovely. She was a lady,³³
 and the belle of the village: she *once* was the fairest of all.
 But her heart was as cold as the snow on the mountains ...
 she gave me up *at once* for the glitter of gold –
 O she gave me up for the glitter of gold - *the glitter of gold*.

And *though* my life *it has finished*: I am over and done *with* –
 I am done *with* wild wandering away for ever ...
 far from *my* home and relations – *those people I love: those people I love – love:*
those people I love ... and shall never see more.

Go gather around me a class of bold *rangers* who shoot fast and straight
 and tell them the story of *their* comrade's sad fate.
 Give each one and all *of them* a timely good warning –
 quite gently, say, 'O please stop *with* your gold gambling.
 And quit drinking with powder-painted ladies!
 O give up wild roving and gold gambling before its too late.'
 Tell one to tell the other before they go *any* further
 to give up *their* wild roving before it's too late;
 before they are cut down in the height of their bloom.

O I'm a *young* cow hand and I know I done wrong!

O I'm a *young* cow hand and I know I am doomed.

'twas once as a bronco buster I used to be brave;
 but *taint* it a pity, I came *down* to Roy Beans
 to gamble and drink with flash girls ... and now to the *cold* grave.
 And now to the *cold* grave – *the cold* grave.

Get six jolly cow hands to come handle my coffin:
 O let sixteen *pretty* maidens *fair* sing to bear up my pall.
 Let them put bunches of white lilies³⁴ all over my coffin.
 Let them throw roses to deaden *you* footsteps – as they fall.

O pound the drum loudly and play the fife proudly,

³² *In his youth* blind to the 'true' character of his lady: seeing her only as 'an object of desire' – his "worldes welfare" & "godesse." A false value derived from self-centered love ...

³³ *Duchess* 848-58: Her eyes 'glade & sadde' simple & without hypocrisy. The steadiness of her eyes reveals her 'measure,' temperance - follows the Middle Way: *medium tenere beati*: her eyes do harm only to those who desire her carnally – in temperance she does not chide them.

³⁴ *The Sword of Ste. Catherine*, (pure, undefiled, inspirer of wisdom). As well, ANGELS wear chaplets of white lilies.

VIRGIL: "Manibus o date lilia plenis." Beatrice *alone* now guides Dante.

play up the Death March as you carry me along.
But give up no wild whoopies – no wild whoopies
 to chase off the devil as you carry me along:
 O to scare off the devil as you carry me along.
 No wild whoopies to chase off the devil
 over the hillside and beat him ... *on down around the stump*
 over the meadow – on to *you green meadow* ...
whar-fo bequeath ah Y' go and lay me down ...
 for I'm a young cow puncher and know ***I done bought me hell.***

I'm an honest young cow puncher even though, *and* I know, I done wrong.

Hi yi a poor lonesome cow hand gone wild roving:
 Hi yi come ye and list to my sad song:
 Hi yi about a lonely boy who knew he'd done *so* wrong

Then drag your rope *very* slowly
 and rattle your spurs *ever so* lowly,
 take me not *though* out *onto* the lonesome prairie
and fire ye no salvo – no salvo ye fire o'er *to where you lay me down* ...
 to send a poor cow hand *back* to his home – back to his home:
for I'm an honest young cow hand
 cut down in the height of my prime.
 I'm just an honest cow hand even though I done *so* wrong,
 and I'm shot in the guts and I know I must die.
 O I'm shot through and through and now I must die.
 ... and now I must die! Now must I die! – must I die! – O I die! – I die ...

O bury me not out *though, y'all, O* out on the lonesome prairie –
 where the wild *kiyotes* will howl over me.
 O bury me not all alone out on the lonely prairie!
 Where the rattlesnakes hiss and the wind blows, O so free.
 O please bury me not beside my knife and *my six-shooter*,
 Not with silver spurs on my heels,
 not with rifle by my side ...
 Bury me near by the churchyard *down* in *yon* valley so green:
there beneath the willow, O beneath the weeping willow tree.
And hang ye up my trusty six-shooter, high *up* in the branches over me
 to prove as fair warning to all *that* wild wandering was the death of me ...

O place ye no bottles of *fine* brandy at head nor foot of my grave,
 instead of a tombstone, to mark my last resting place ...
that those whom might find may drink and forget *about* wild wandering away forever
 and hang up their guns - go back *on* home to their *loving* families ...

... *that* every one who passes by, *mightest* lift up their eyes not to drink
but take in the skies - O the great starry skies above.
 O drink in the great starry skies *for* the cow hand below.

... *that* perhaps if any honest young cow puncher comes *on* by,
 he'll find me *there* sleeping eternally
 and perhaps he'll think of me.

Last night I lay on the prairie looking up to the stars above,
 and wondered of those cow punchers ever-drifting *on-high* - ever-drifting *on-high*.
 in the sweet bye-and-bye - O the sweet bye-and-bye:
 and in the dusk of the twilight, listening
 to *the* soft winds whispering ... *so* lowly:
 and *the* darkening shadows *were* failing - *like* memories - *so* slowly...

Roll on, roll on, roll on little doggies:³⁵
 roll on, roll on, roll on little doggies - roll on.
 Yippie Ti Yi Yo - gi'long li'l doggies, gi'long - it's your misfortune & none of my own.
 The road to that bright happy region is a dim narrow trail - so they say.
 While the road that leads to perdition is posted and blazed all the way - Yippie Ti Yi Yo.

O *pray* sometimes think of me *below*.

O had I the wings of a little *snow-white* dove - so far, far away would I fly,
 right back into the arms of my one true love ...
 and there would I lay *me* down dead:
 but *though* I have searched, I ne'er *yit* found *one* *sech* as *she* ...

O my friends and relations, they live in the Nation;
 and they know not where their dear boy has gone.
 I gave up my home - *wanting* to see the *whole* wild world.
 I steered my course *first* here out to the West and hired *on* to a *bold* rancher ...
 and the rest you can plainly see: go take me to the graveyard
 and throw the dirt over me - throw *ye* the dirt over me
 for I have been murdered ... *and* you know *they* have done wrong:
 I began to drink and then I began to souse - my life is soon done.
 I took to card playing in Roy Bean's Dram-and-Dame House -
 I got in a brawl and shot through the bowels and you see where I lay:
 giving what was unfairly due, Bad Fortune, a whore ... was the cause of it all.

³⁵ The "doggies" get nervous in crowds, and the cow hands had to lope around quietly in the darkness, singing to them, so as not to frighten them.

O got shot by a gambler, and am dying *here* all alone.

Now doom is my due for I know I have done wrong – *and I'm going to hell!*
... so wrong: *I'm going to hell!* **O I'm going to hell!** and never coming back

When I die, just bury me *as I be* – no box black suit or *dandy* roller hat,
no blue-white shirt or shiny shoes with pointed toes *so tall* ...

O don't put *yer* moon-shine whiskey in my coffin,
no deck of cards in my hands.
Don't *let them* weep and wail, don't *let 'em* moan at all.
And put *ye* no marihuana or tobacco onto my dead body ...
though you smoke and spit chaw as ye carry me along:

O take no rolling dice shooters or card players for pall bearers,
no coke snuffers to sing in procession *mine* funerary song.

Put *ye* no gold in the cold ground with my body,
but for the two pennies *which* ye place over my dead staring eyes.
Put ice at my feet, *though*, for the place I am going ... I won't even be cool with that.³⁶

Now doom is my due for I know I've done wrong – *and I'm going to hell!*
I'm going to hell! **O I'm going to hell!** and never coming back

O carry me with soft steps, mournful, solemn, slow,
to a grave ye dug *both* long and wide, *and* deep ...
for I'm a young cow hand and I know I done wrong.
and I know I done wrong – so *very, very* wrong.

I wear a bandanna, my spurs are of silver, my pony is gray-dappled:
and while riding the ranges my luck never changes,
with foot in the stirrup I gallop for aye. I gallop for aye – *aye*:
with foot in the stirrup I gallop for aye. Whoopie-kiyi-yi-aye.

O when the valleys were dusty my bronco was trusty.
He loped *through* the blizzards, the snow in his ears,
the cattle mayeth scattered ... but what did it matter?

... my lasso I used to throw with perfection
roping mossy horn cattle was for us was great fun,
to cattle I always gave great satisfaction
with a band of wild bronco-busters. But now I'm done – O now I am done. I am done.

³⁶ *Jessie James was put on ice ...*

My stallion was sure at riding and cutting and roping ...
 and my rope was a halter for pig-headed steers – pig-headed steers.
 and when we were far from the ranches –
 as daylight paled, I cooked over his turds and scrub brush,
 and when I'd partaken of *my* hardtack and beans and salted-back-bacon,
 I whistled a merry old song of the trail – merry old song of the trail – the trail.
 I whistled a merry old song of the trail.

... the sun is fast sinking, the stars fast rising
 and I shall never see morning again – O I shall ne'er see morning again ...
 come stand ye around me; my breath is expiring
 I'll soon be ready to enter the tomb – O *my tomb*: and I shall soon enter my tomb.

I've missed life eternal, I'm bound for destruction:
 but God was willing that I should do so: God was willing that I should do so.
 Grieve not while thinking of my *wretched* condition:
 I'm a vile sinner, and now *livid* must I go – *livid* must I go. O *livid* I must go.

My pearl maiden will be there to greet me
 beyond this slow river of death – beyond this slow river of death.
She's lovely and pure as the dew on *yon* white lily.
Her image has always been with me – carried me:
 O carry me up through *my* long lonely *dim-growing memories* –
 grim growing death *quickly becoming* ... *my livid-dying reality*.
 And *that image* I'm taking *it* down through the valley –
 through the dark lowly vale of tears we call death;
 locked in my heart to be with me together always ...
 now at last I am gone: now at last I'm gone ... at last, I am gone.

Please gather up *ye* my last hand of poker;
 the one I dropped when I got my death wound,
 send it and my empty six gun holster home to my father,
 after you've buried me deep in my tomb ...
 tell them these things were the ruin of his son
 and never to part with the last fatal hand
 but carry *it* with him always just as a reminder
 of when I first began to drift wild wandering.

O a wild wind wandering far away from home forever now.
 Yet the Nation is my home and a dwelling place for me.

O a wild wind wandering far away from home forever.
 And, O let the turf that my bones shall cover
 be cut from this land that is trod by the free.

O a wild wind wandering far away from home
and wild kiyotes are howling over me – O howling o'er me.

eidel-aye-e-ou odel-aye-e
eidel-aye-e-ou odel-aye-e

Please wont someone carry *a* word to my dear gray-headed mother;
my last greeting to my beloved sister, and *my* niece, O so dear.
Ask them to forgive *me* what I *have* sinned against them,
for never again will I meet *with* them here ...
tell them I loved them all through my wild wanderings
and *that* nobody here knows my name ...
Pity! but there is none other far dearer than mother, or sister, or niece,
who would weep bitterly if *she* knew I were here.

No maiden to send for love to share a departing kiss.

No memory I might here hold onto ... to give my life *some* worth.

No last letter I had from my dearest lover -
begging me so kindly to come to my home. *O please come home ...*
Lord! If I had found and married this lady,
quit my wild wandering *ways* and done as she'd bid ...
I'd never ever have come down here to Roy Bean's ... and now I'm going to die
I'm going to die ... I'm going to die.³⁷

When Death in cold arms doth embrace and lull me to sleep,
its by the side of my Rosie that I'll eternally rest in peace.

I got in a battle whilest playing *at* stud poker ...
and I don't want my people to share in my shame.

O send for the preacher to say the words over my body;
I'm a young cow hand who will soon be quite dead.
God shorten my breath for I'm in such terrible pain ...
I'm in sech terrible pain – *sech* terrible pain.

O send for the doctor³⁸ to heal up my sore wounds so deep,
that I might have salts and pills of white mercury,
for I lay here bleeding to painful death alone in the street;

³⁷ *My silks & fine array, / My smiles & anguish'd air, / By love are driven away; / & mournful lean
Despair / Brings me yew to deck my grave: / Such end 'true' lovers have ...* Cf. *The Blind Archer*,
"Death were dearer to me than life." [*The Finest Legends of the Rhine*, Wilhelm Ruland.]

³⁸ See, ACTS 9. 33-4. Cf. *Duchess* 39-40: For ther is physician but oon / that may hele; but that is don ...

a gambler shot me in the breast and now I must die. O I must die – I must die.

Farewell my friends, farewell my relations,
my earthly career has cost me sore.

Come, dear mother, *too*, and sing to me a song ...
for my knee bones *am* aching, and my poor heart *am* breaking;
well I know how I have so done you wrong.
O come, my dear mother, and sit down nigh beside me.
Sit down beside me an' hold my hand, tears pity thy face
with sore lamentations I know I'm a disgrace:
in my younger days I used to be *so gay* – O so gay,
down around the church house *weeping willow trees* around me
all the pretty young maidens gathered with armfuls of lavender – calling me bold.

O o'er my coffin put handfuls of lavender,
handfuls of lavender on every side
while the women ought to carry me - young whore gals to woo me so along,
bringing with them bunches of sweet smelling roses ...
 sweet smelling roses to drive me along in procession ...
 covering me with sweet smelling roses so as not of me to smell

He'd asked for a candle, to light him to bed with,
likewise white flannel to wrap round his head;
For his poor head so aching, and his heart so breaking,
for the young cow puncher lay shot down in the street ...
and he was dying alone ... dying alone ... dying alone ...

He'd called *again* for his mother, his dear gray-headed mother,
oft-times she had told him of his past life before roamin',
when along came those flash girls and his money he'd squander,
and along with those flash girls he'd took his delight.
At the top of the street those flash girls were all standing;
and one to another they were low whispering, and they said,
'There lies a young cowboy whose money we've squandered,
there lies a young cowboy shot down dead in his prime.'

A group had gathered round him, all comrades in a fright,
the tears rolled down each manly cheek as he said his last goodnight,
up spoke the dyin' cow hand, sayin' do not weep for me,
I'm crossin' a dark deep river to a country that is free. - do not weep for me

“O wont some one go bring me a drink of cold water,³⁹
Cold water to cool my fevered hot temples: ice to soothe my parched lips –
It burns like ‘blazes.’ I think I’ll soon be dead.” – the poor cow puncher said.

The handsome young cow puncher *then* ceased *to his* talking.
We all knew he was soon to be dead: soon to be dead.
His trials here on earth were soon to be forever over – e’er o’er.

The handsome young cow puncher was soon to be dead.

I hastened⁴⁰
to do his bidding
and fetch him cold water;
I walked very slowly with downcast head ...
before I returned, *though*,
the dying cow puncher’s liberated spirit *had* departed from its earthly bonds;
his ghost, it had left him and rode the last round-up *on* to the eternal land:
it’d left him *forever* and gone to our Giver – the young cow hand lay senseless *and* dead.
And a six-shooter *was* in his lifeless hand –
O a six-shooter *in* his lifeless hand ...
O a six-shooter was in his lifeless hand.

And now the young cow hand we wrapped up in his saddle blanket,
each by the corners of his bloody-stained slicker,
and four wild bronco-busters we shall carry his dead body ...

and those little whore-gals fair shall carry *wild* roses & myrtle⁴¹ ... following *along*,
not for to smell him as they pass by *along* in procession.

We swung our ropes lowly and rattled our spurs slowly,
And gave up no wild whoopies as we carried him along.
And one of the flash girls bore – *she* - an armful laurel,⁴²
And, violets and marigolds ...to place on his *sepulchre*
as we carried him along *the street* – *down* to the prairie
so *that* we might lay him *into his* eternal rest

for ever alone to sleep.

³⁹ Drinking the waters of the Underworld river Lethe, according to Classical Greek mythology, caused the mind to forget its earthly existence.

⁴⁰ Cf. BLAKE, *Contemplation*: I walked through dreary places with him, & in church-yards; & oft I’ve found myself sitting by Sorrow on a tombstone.

Woe! cried *the muse*.

⁴¹ *Myrtilus* – emblem of immortality – remains green ‘to remind’ lovers *that* life may lie hidden in the lap of death. Cf., Dante *Purgatorio* XXI. 85: That name most lasting & most honoured.

⁴² Daphne *was* changed into a laurel *by Peneus* when pursued by Apollo. Laurel: favoured tree of *the gods* – laurel wreath: consecrated crown of mighty conquerors & *poets*.

We beat *the* drum slowly and played *the* fife lowly,
and bitterly wept as we bore him along:
for we all loved our comrade, so brave, young and han'some,
we all loved our comrade although he'd done wrong.

We took him *not* down *into* the green valley to lay the sod o'er him ... *there was none!*
O we had but hard-packed prairie dirt and dust to bury him *in* – *shallow too* ...
drinking no brandy, *though, as* we carried him – our spurs jingle-jangling – along.
No golden trumpet *was* sounded to bring in the *morning* daylight -
to let all know that he was *now* gone *forever* ...

We turned and walked away – his ghost 'twas departed.
The comrade we loved we'd laid quite dead in the cold grave.

He'd gone out on that one last round-up – our comrade was dead.

The handsome young cow puncher had died and was *left* buried *on the prairie* alone.

So no one can come to *perhaps* find him ... *eternally* sleeping under the clouds:
For ever *he is gone* wild roving ... for ever and anon away from his home:
for ever *far* away from *his* home & relations ...
with ne'er e'en a one true love to tell her not to weep 'for we shall yet meet' –
'for we shall yet meet' – 'for we shall yet meet' – these were his dying words.

... and we buried him there out on the lone prairie,
wrapped up in his old saddle-blanket & blood-stained slicker
... with a rock for upon to eternally rest his head – O we left him:
our comrade was dead and it was time for us quick to git along – gi'long ...

His bones now rot out on the lonesome prairie – alone.

O shallow we buried him alone out on the prairie ... his head resting upon a stone
& o'er him we set his saddle - to mark his tomb:
now he sleeps where the wild prairie wind smoothly blows.

& on top of his headstone you'll see wise words written,
carved into the leather with the very knife he once wore.

Draw nearer to me, comrades, an' listen to what I say,
I'm goin' to tell a story before I pass away,
'the lawless wilderness is ruled by one plain and simple truth,'
and down at Roy Bean's Dram-and-Dame House ... the quick rule the dead:

O on top of his headstone the trail boss had carved very deep
with the sharp blade the handsome young cow hand once wore:

“All you young cowboys, wild and free, take warning by me,
and never go courting with the flash girls in the Dram-and-Dame House,
flash girls and card playing were the ruin of me - Boot Hill.⁴³”

Ich bin noch nicht so weit!

Hie-ye-ye-ye-ye-ye-ye yo-ye-yo ha ye yu ... eye ... ey yo.
O great expanse of the blue sky, see me roaming here: ey yo he-ye-ye-ye-ye.
Again on the warpath lonely ... I trust in you, protect me: He-ye-ye-ye-ye-ye.⁴⁴



⁴³ Sam Hill – A euphemism for the devil. "What in the Sam Hill are you doing?"

⁴⁴ "Shiriki" (Coyote Warrior Song), Pawnee song. "*The Indians' Book*" by Natalie Curtis, 1987: 129 – 30. New York: Bonanza Books.

Famous CATTLE Brands

by Oren Arnold

First cattle brand used in this hemisphere, and one of the prettiest ever, was the Three Christian Crosses of Hernando Cortez, Spanish Explorer who in 1519 brought the first cows from Europe. His crosses represent the Holy Trinity.



Will Rogers' brand was this fireplace andiron, as humble and homely in design as Will himself. He said it was etched on his mind from long hours gazing at the fire.



The man who owned this brand was named Peter Coffin!



Wildest, most lawless bunch of cowboys ever to herd cattle in old Arizona were called "the Aztec cutthroats." Appropriately, they used the Hashknife Brand.



A cowboy won thousands of acres and more thousands of cattle in one famous poker-hand gamble. His winning hand was Four Sixes.



Ten Texas counties were given in payment to contractors who built the great capitol at Austin. They started a ranch on their land, chose Ten-In-Texas — XIT — for a brand.

Adapted from the book HOT IRONS (Macmillan)
by Oren Arnold and John P. Hale



XP

EXPRESS HORSES WERE BRANDED

THROUGH THE SOUTH PASS

WELLS FARGO STAGE

FORT SUTTER

SACRAMENTO

SAN FRANCISCO

THE ANTELOPE

THE GREAT SALT LAKE

PONY EXPRESS ROUTE APRIL 3, 1860 TO OCTOBER 24, 1861

The Pony Express following the northern route brought east and west together thereby holding California and the West in the Union. It was put out of business by the transcontinental telegraph and hastened the building of a cross country Railroad.

Russell, Majors and Waddell
owners and operators.

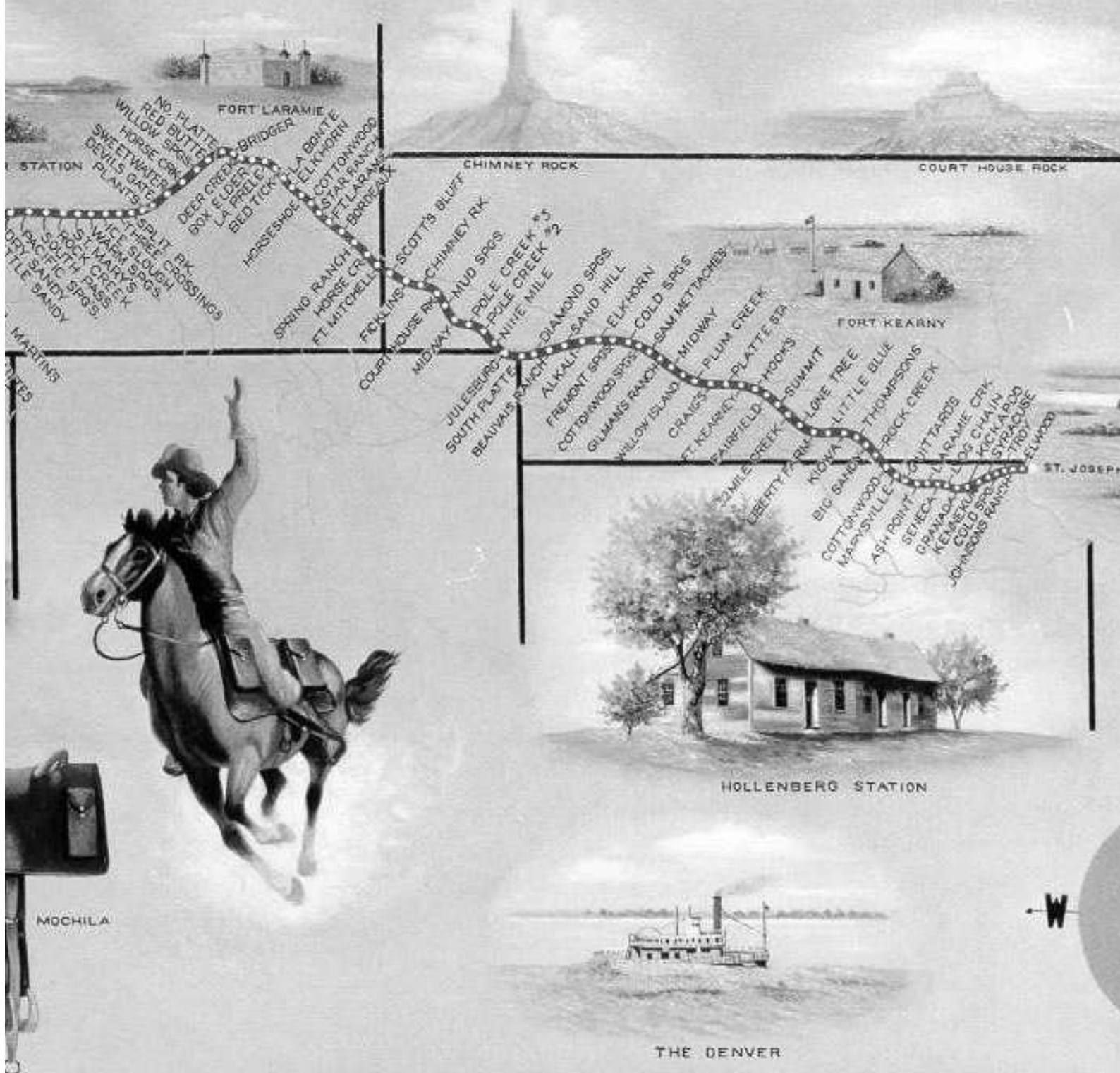
SADDLE AND



WAGONS WEST



BUFFALO ALONG THE





“Lasca”

I want free life and I want fresh air;
 And I long for the gallop after the cattle,
 In their frantic flight, like the roar of battle,
 The mêlée of horns, and hoofs, and heads
 That wars and wrangles and scatters and spreads--
 The green beneath and the blue above,
 And dash and danger, and life and love --
 And Lasca!

Lasca used to ride
 On a mouse-gray mustang close to my side,
 With blue serapé and bright-belled spur;
 I laughed with joy as I looked at her!
 Little knew she of books or of creeds;
 An Avé Maria sufficed her needs;
 Little she cared, save to be by my side,
 To ride with me, and ever to ride,
 From San Saba's shore to Lavaca's tide.
 She was as bold as the billows that beat,
 She was as wild as the breezes that blow;
 From her little head to her little feet
 She was swayed in her suppleness to and fro
 By each gust of passion; a sapling pine
 That clings to the edge of a beetling bluff,
 And wars with the wind when the weather is rough,
 Is like this Lasca, this love of mine.
 She would hunger that I might eat,
 She'd take the bitter and leave me the sweet;
 But once, when I made her jealous for fun,
 At something I'd whispered, or looked, or done,
 One Sunday, in San Antonio,
 To a glorious girl in the Alamo,
 She drew from her garter a dear little dagger,
 And -- sting of a wasp! -- it made me stagger--
 An inch to the left, or an inch to the right,
 And I wouldn't be maundering here to-night;
 But she sobbed, and, sobbing, so swiftly bound
 Her torn rebosa about the wound,
 That I quite forgave her. Scratches don't count

[“Lasca”, written by Frank Desprez, in 1882: this version from “*Songs of the Horses*,” 1920, edited by Robert Frothingham.]

In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.

Her eye was brown -- a deep, deep brown;
 Her hair was darker than her eye;
 And something in her smile and frown,
 Curled crimson lip and instep high,
 Showed that there ran in each blue vein,
 Mixed with the milder Aztec strain,
 The vigorous vintage of Old Spain.
 She was alive in every limb
 With feeling, to the finger tips;
 And when the sun is like a fire,
 And the sky one shining, soft sapphire--
 One does not drink in little sips.

The air was heavy, the night was hot,
 I sat by her side, and forgot-- forgot;
 Forgot the herd that was taking its rest,
 Forgot that the air was close oppressed--
 That the Texas norther comes without warning,
 In the dead of night or the dawn of morning--
 And once let the herd at its breath take fright,
 And nothing on earth can stop its flight;
 And woe to the rider, and woe to the steed,
 That falls in front of its mad stampede!

Hark! Was that thunder? No, by the Lord!
 I sprang to my saddle without a word:
 One foot on mine, and she clung behind--
 Away! on a wild chase down the wind!
 And never was the fox-chase half so hard,
 And never was steed so little spared--
 For we rode for our lives: you shall hear how we fared
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.

The mustang flew, and we urged him on;
 There was one chance left, and you have but one--
 Halt, jump to the ground, and shoot your horse,
 Crouch under his carcass and take your chance;
 And if the steers, in their frantic course,
 Don't batter you both to pieces at once,
 You may thank your star; or else, good-bye
 To the quickening kiss and the long-drawn sigh,
 To the balmy air and the open sky,

In Texas, down by the Rio Grande.

The cattle gained on us--and just as I felt
 For my old six-shooter behind in my belt,
 Down came the mustang, and down came we,
 Clinging together, and-- what was the rest--?
 A body that spread itself over my breast,
 Two arms that shielded my dizzy head,
 Two lips that close to my lips were pressed;
 Then came thunder in my ears,
 As over us surged the sea of steers,
 Blows that beat blood into my eyes,
 And when I could rise--
 Lasca was dead!

I gouged out a grave a few feet deep,
 And there in Earth's bosom I laid her to sleep;
 And there she is lying-- and no one knows--
 'Neath summer's sun and winter's snows;
 Full many a day the flowers have spread
 A pall of petals over her head.

And the little gray hawk hangs aloft in the air,
 And the sly coyoté trots here and there,
 And the black snake glides, and glitters and slides
 Into a rift in a cotton-wood tree;
 And the buzzard sails on--
 And comes and is gone--
 Stately and still like a ship at sea.
 And I wonder why I do not care
 For the things that are, like the things that were--
 Does half my heart lie buried there
 In Texas, down by the Rio Grande?



Absquatulate

Funeral Dirge

Snares off (muffled)

